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COMPASSION to the POOR
Recommended.

I N A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

MELTON-MOWBRAY,

LEICESTERSHIRE,

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1782.

By THOMAS FORD, LL. D.
VICAR.

Be ye merciful, even as your Father also is merciful.

LUKE vi. 36.

It is more blessed to give, than to receive.

ACTS xx. 35.

NORTHAMPTON:

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(FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR OF Melton-Mowbray, and
it's Hamlets.)

*On account of the advanced price of printing
and publishing, the author humbly relies upon the
partiality of his friends to promote the sale—
considering the Objects for whose relief it is in-
tended.*



T O

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
ROBERT
EARL OF HARBOROUGH,
VISCOUNT SHERARD;
(BARON LEITRIM of the Kingdom of Ireland:)

MY LORD,

THE pre-eminence of Nobility is attended with the highest advantage and most solid delight, when it extends the influence of a bright example, and confers the exalted pleasure of doing good.

It is Your Lordship's praise, that amidst the splendor of titles, and the gratifications of wealth, You are not unmindful of the solemn charge given to the rich, by Him, who made them so: with a princely fortune, You have a liberal heart, and an open hand: Your house, My Lord, gives me some idea of those good old times, when Hospitality welcomed the stranger, and Charity never suffered the poor man to depart unrelieved from it's gates. Anxious to recompense the past services of the aged, that

ample foundation for their maintenance, begun by Your Lordship's noble ancestors, You have most amply compleated; having increased the number of Your Pensioners, augmented their stipend, and lately erected a stately edifice for their reception.

Your Lordship's generous attention to the convenience and improvements of this Town, must ever call for it's united respect and thanks: these I account myself unable to express—but my desire in thus addressing Your Lordship, is to present to You the heart-felt acknowledgments of my *poor* parishioners, who partaking so largely of Your Lordship's bounty at this necessitous season, will not, I trust, eat their bread, without calling down blessings on the head of their kind benefactor.

Confiding in Your Lordship's experienced condescension, I venture to commit the following hasty discourse to Your notice: it was preached in immediate consequence of Your Lordship's communicating to me Your extensive plan for relieving the indigent inhabitants of this place: as it aims to concur with so compassionate a design, and is well meant—may I hope Your Lordship will forgive the defects?

That Your Lordship may long, long continue a faithful steward of those talents entrusted to
You.

You from the Most High; and in the day when
all worldly grandeur shall be eclipsed, and riches
be of no worth, You may receive unfading
honours, and be accounted great in the king-
dom of heaven; is the sincere wish, and earnest
prayer of,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Very much obliged,

And obedient servant,

THOMAS FORD.

MELTON-MOWBRAY,

December 13, 1782.

You from the Most High, and in the day when
all worldly greatness shall be eclipsed, and there
be of no worth, You may receive upholding
honour, and be rewarded great in the King-
dom of heaven, in the instant which I send
hither of

Yours I am,

Your Obedient Servant,

Very much obliged,

And obedient servant,

THOMAS FORD.

My dear Sir,

I received your letter of the 13th inst.

DEUTERONOMY, XV. II.

FOR THE POOR *shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.*

THOUGH *Charity be the distinguishing grace of the Gospel, enforced therein by the most cogent arguments, yet very excellent things are spoken in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning it. Our Lord indeed, and the beloved disciple after Him, calleth it a new commandment;* but it is only so in this respect, that it was confirmed afresh, by the special instance of that inestimable love, greater than which the world never had seen, or could see, that a man lay down his life for his friends:† in every other view it is the old commandment which we have heard from the beginning,‡ when mankind were early taught of God to love one another,§ because He first loved them,¶ and remembered them in their low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.¶¶ And indeed, how should it be otherwise, since both Old and New Testament proceed from the same divine wisdom, the Father of*

* John xiii. 34. † John xv. 13. ‡ 1 John ii. 7, 8.
 ¶ 1 Thess. iv. 9. § 1 John iv. 19. ¶ Psalm cxxvi. 23.

of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; and in both, eternal life is promised, through faith which worketh by love,† and the keeping of the commandments of God.‡*

When, therefore, we observe how sweetly, in the book of Deuteronomy, the care of labouring *servants* is recommended to our consideration, the wants of indigent *strangers* to our compassion, and the necessities of all distressed *poor* to our relief, no one who reads but will strive to run with delight the way of so pleasant a commandment; and prove, by his cheerful obedience, that love is the fulfilling of the Law.§ *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: at his day thou shalt give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.—When thou cuttest down thy harvest in thy field, and hast forgotten a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it, it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands. ||—If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart,*

nor

* James i. 17.

† Gal. v. 6.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 19.

§ Rom. xiii. 10.

|| Deut. xxiv. 14—to the end.

nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and thou shalt surely lend him sufficiently for his need in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, the seventh year, the year of release is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.

In enlarging upon the subject, I shall,

I. Offer some reasons, why the poor shall never cease out of the land.

II. Point out what tempers and conduct we should exercise towards them.

III. Urge some motives to excite us, in obedience to the command of God, to open wide our hand to our brother, to our poor, and to our needy in our land.—And may He, the Holy Ghost, by whose divine fellowship all the comforts of time and eternity, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

B

and

*and the love of the Father** are communicated to us, and whose first fruit in the regenerated soul is love† to God, and love to man for God's sake, pour into our hearts this most excellent gift of *Charity*, the bond of *peace*, and of all *virtue*.

I. In answer to the question, why *the poor shall never cease out of the land*, we may use the words of our Lord, spoken upon another occasion; *even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* ‡ He who created the world, hath constituted divers orders and distinctions to subsist among those that dwell therein, arising from their various endowments either of body or mind. Thus, the *rich* and the *poor*, the *learned* and the *unlearned*, the *strong* and the *weak* meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all, § each having his proper gift, one after this manner, and another after that, as it seemeth best to His godly wisdom. Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel to honour and another to dishonour; || and hath not the creator the same, who made us, and not we ourselves; ¶ may He give us understanding to acknowledge this His absolute sovereignty over us, and our dependance upon Him:—so shall we never dispute His authority, resist His will, set aside His laws, or say unto Him in a passionate or repining temper, *Why hast Thou made me thus*; † but

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
§ Prov. xxii. 2.

† Gal. v. 22.
|| Rom. ix. 21.
‡ Rom. ix. 20.

‡ Matt. xi. 26.
¶ Psal. c. 3.

but always abiding contented in that station wherein we are placed, knowing that we are placed there by *One, who hath need of us to glorify Him in it: in a great house, saith the Apostle, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour:** let us, therefore, who are *God's workmanship*, pray, that each in our place, and according to our capacity, may become *sanctified and meet for the maker's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

2. God hath decreed that *poverty, trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, and every other adversity* shall be our constant attendants here upon earth, that we never forget the cause of all, which is *Sin*. Man, being a *transgressor from the womb*, is ordained to be a *sufferer till death: he is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;*† every page of his existence, like that of *Ezekiel's roll*, being written *within and without, lamentation, and mourning, and woe:*‡ which dire necessity nothing can alleviate or remove, but a comfortable application of the *redemption which is in Jesus, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.*§ Therefore, it is that the *whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now;*|| and that the *one fruitful land of the whole earth hath God made barren for the*
B 2 *wickedness*

* 2 Tim. ii. 20. † Job v. 7. ‡ Ezek. ii. 10.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 47. || Rom. viii. 22.

wickedness of them that dwell therein. Every day that man goeth forth unto his work and labour until the evening,† he may see what sin hath done, and be humbled for it—then, instead of murmuring at his lot, he will wonder it is so much better than he deserves, and be thankful that he hath any other food than the bread of tears to eat, and plenteousness of tears to drink.‡ Would we then remove the evils of poverty, recourse must be had to the remedy provided for Sin, in the merits and mercies of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though He was rich, yet for our sake became poor, that we through His poverty, might be rich indeed.§ Through Him we obtain forgiveness of sins, whereby our sorrows are turned into joy—peace, which the world cannot give or take from us; and that godliness, which, with contentment, is great gain;|| making every affliction in our way to heaven appear light, and but of a moment's continuance, when we know it worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.¶*

3. God, who alone can bring good out of evil, hath graciously made poverty to be necessary to the support and advantage of His people upon earth. If the poor were to cease out of the land, so must labour and industry too; the beasts of the field would multiply against us,† thorns and thistles over-
run

* Psal. cvii. 34.

† Psal. civ. 23.

‡ Psal. lxxx. 5.

§ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

|| 1 Tim. vi. 6.

¶ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† Exod. xxiii. 29.

run the *creation*, and there would not be a man to till the ground;* the promise indeed, is sure—while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and summer and winter shall not cease;† but then, the precept is as authoritative—If a man will not work, neither shall he eat.‡ Thus, poverty leads to industry, industry to plenty, procuring and preserving health, which giveth a relish to every enjoyment below the sun: the sleep also of a labouring man is sweet;§ and such a one who thus eateth of the labour of his hands, and hath also to give to a poorer than himself (than which perhaps there is not a more lovely sight under heaven) we may pronounce as happy as this world can make him. “He is not to be idle, but to labour that he may eat; he is not to be niggardly, but to eat when he has laboured; he is neither to be unjust, by living upon the labours, nor enslaved, by depending upon the bounty of others; but to eat of his own labours: and he whose labours procure him a sustenance hath enough to be blessed and happy.” || So, then, neither is the poor without

* Gen. ii. 5. † Gen. viii. 22. ‡ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

§ Eccles. v. 12. || Psal. cxxviii. 1, 2.

See Dr. HORNE on the place: whose learned and evangelical commentary I most eagerly seize this occasion of recommending to all those who make the Psalms of David their songs in the house of their pilgrimage, and would extract the richest truth and sweetest consolations from that heavenly book. I am indebted to this elegant author for many beautiful hints on the subject

out the rich, nor the rich without the poor in the Lord, the members of the *body politic*, like those of the *body natural*, not subsisting, but in mutual dependance upon each other—the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; neither again the head to the foot, I have no need of thee—nay more, those members of the body, which are feeble, are more necessary.—What is the conclusion of the whole matter, but *harmony and love*? that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another, and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

4. In this unequal distribution, God hath designed that *poverty and riches* should work together for the good of the soul, by improving in us those things which accompany salvation. For what state of life, like that of the poor man, so calculated to teach one how to pray, to suffer, and to be humble; to endear the memory of the Holy Jesus, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;† and

to

* 1 Cor. xii. 26.

† Isa. liii. 3.

subject of *Charity*, contained in his valuable writings, particularly, in a sermon preached in 1774, before the guardians of the Asylum for female orphans, where the profit and pleasure of giving in preference to receiving, is put in a new and irresistible light: the expressions which I have freely taken, are “marked,” as such, in the following pages; a liberty he *must* pardon, when it is considered that he never appears in the pulpit, or from the press, but every one that hears or reads, immediately seeks for an opportunity to quote him.

to endue the soul with that *patience* and *meekness*, which in the sight of God is of great price, according as it is written, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:** or what greater happiness can *riches* confer upon their envied possessors, than giving them daily occasions of *gratitude* to Him, who *hath* thus made them to differ from their brethren,† and honoured them to be His *merciful stewards* in distributing *this Charity* throughout the land: blessed themselves whilst blessing others, and looking to receive their reward at His appearing, who hath left every poor man in the hands of the rich, and saith, *take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee:*‡ and He will be as good as His word. In *this life* only, *Charity* is the *nearest* and *surest* road to *wealth*, if men would make but trial: for he that *hath* pity upon the poor, *lendeth unto the Lord*;§ putting his money to the *best interest*, even to those *exchangers*, who will not fail to return him *his own with usury*.||—Thus much may suffice, *why the poor shall never cease out of the land*,—because it is the unalterable determination of heaven, reminding man of the *curse* entailed upon *sin*—it exciteth to *labour* and to *mutual offices of assistance* and good will in *society*—it calleth for such *temper*s in the poor, and produceth such *dispositions* among

* Matt. v. 3. † 1 Cor. iv. 7. ‡ Luke x. 35.

§ Prov. xix. 17. || Matt. xxv. 27.

among the rich, as cause in both thanksgiving to God. I proceed,

II. To point out what *tempers* and *conduct* we should exercise towards our brother, our poor, and our needy in the land. Let us, first, observe, we are by no means to overlook or despise them. It is our duty to render honour to whom honour is due,—it is equally so to be courteous unto all men,* and to condescend to those of low estate:† for, if there come into our assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and we have respect unto him that weareth the gay cloathing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say unto the poor, stand thou there, or sit here, under my foot-stool; are we not then partial in ourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts‡—do we not act contrary to the judgment of God, who, when He became incarnate, passed by the families of the great and mighty, and did not abhor the obscurity of Nazareth, or the disgrace of the carpenter's son. Who art thou, then, O vain man, that doest despise, or set at nought, thy brother, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ§—there will be no respect of persons—humility will be accounted the advancement to the honour that cometh of God; and the only distinction then paid to the proud, the

* 1 Pet. iii. 8.

† Rom. xii. 16.

‡ Jam. ii. 2, 3, 4.

§ Rom. xiv. 10.

the imperious, and the oppressive, will be, that mighty men shall be mightily tormented: * the last shall be first, and the first last. † Happy for us, if at that solemn audit, the poor shall become our friends, and, when all others fail, receive us into everlasting habitations: ‡ but woe! if the assembled multitude of those we have insulted or neglected, shall lift up their voices to cry, our soul was filled with the reproof of the wealthy, and with the despitefulness of the proud. §

Much less are we to oppress the poor. This is done many ways—when we take advantage of their distresses to our own gain—enrich ourselves at a small expence through their labours—impose upon them in the way of buying and selling—defraud them of their hire, or delay to give it them when due; all which cruel acts of extortion, robbery and wrong, though practised without a blush, by those, who are in haste to be rich, || yet are branded in the Scriptures with the blackest mark of infamy and sin; consequently they are persisted in, at the peril of God's wrath and the danger of hell-fire. Woe unto him, that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work. ¶—Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

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* Wisd. vi. 6.
§ Psal. cxxiii. 4.

† Matt. xx. 16.
|| Prov. xxviii. 20.

‡ Luke xvi. 9.
¶ Jer. xxii. 13.

fail, saying, when will the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit—that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell all the refuse of the wheat?—this was their base and thriving scheme—but how heavy falls the judgment on their heads! The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob—surely I will never forget any of their works.*—Very pertinent is the admonition of our Lord. Take heed and beware of Covetousness! † a vice, which, though it put on the semblance of virtue, and would pass under colour of æconomy, industry, and a laudable care for a man's household, (which if he provide not for, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel) ‡ yet is the root of all evil, and the parent of all contradiction—not enjoying what it gets, swelling the principal to no purpose, and lessening the use of money to all purposes for which God sent it; answering no end, but the absurd one that a man may be called rich while he lives, and counted miserable when he dies. “The great business of Providence is to be continually issuing out fresh supplies of the divine bounty to the creature, that lives and subsists like a lamp fed by continual infusions from the same hand which first lights, and sets it up. So that
“covetousness,

* Amos viii. 4.

† Luke xii. 15.

‡ 1 Tim. v. 8.

“ *coveteousness*, is nothing so much as a grand
 “ *contradiction* to *Providence*, while it terminates
 “ wholly within itself: the covetous person
 “ lives, as if the world were made altogether for
 “ him, and not he for the world, to take in every
 “ thing and to part with nothing. The cries of
 “ the Poor never enter into his ears; or if they
 “ do, he has always one ear readier to let them
 “ out, than the other to take them in: in a
 “ word, by his rapines and extortions, he is
 “ always for making as many poor as he can,
 “ and for relieving none; so that it is a question
 “ whether his heart be harder or his fist closer:
 “ he is a pest and a monster, greedier than the
 “ sea, and barrener than the shore: a scandal to
 “ religion, and an exemption from common hu-
 “ manity, and upon no other account fit to live
 “ in this world, but to be made an example of
 “ God’s justice in the next.” *South’s sermons.*
Vol. iv. 441—

And as we are not to despise or oppress, surely
 we ought not to neglect them: *the poor we have*
always with us, for this purpose, *that, whenever*
*we will, we may do them good:** he must shut his
 eyes, who will not see them, and he that *seeing*
 them, *passeth by on the other side*, or *cometh to the*
place where they are, and only *looketh* on them,†
 when it is in the power of his hand to relieve

C 2

them,

* Mark xiv. 7.

† Luke x. 32.

them, must expect *one day to cry himself, and not be heard.* † For who bewailed the fate of that *proud voluptuary*, who could have rejoiced the heart of *Lazarus*, at so cheap a rate as *the crumbs which fell from his table*—but neglecting to do it, in hell lifted up his eyes, *being in torments*,* and in a flame kindled by his own uncharitableness: and, it is *easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for any rich man, of the same un-pitying disposition, to enter into the kingdom of heaven*: † for *whose bath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* § Now, if this be true, what will become of so many in our days, who *waste their substance in riotous living, spend more on their horses and dogs, than would feed and clothe a whole neighbourhood; and whose attention to their beasts far exceed their mercies to the poor!*

But so express as the *command* is, *to open wide our hand to our poor and needy*, we should consider by what ways we may best relieve them—certainly by providing for their *necessities*, and administering to their *comforts*. The *necessities* of the *Poor*, at all times, cry aloud for redress, but especially in seasons so very distressing as the present, when thousands and tens of thousands of

† Prov. xxi. 13.

* Luke xvi. 24.

† Matt. xix. 24.

§ 1 John iii. 17.

of our fellow-creatures are likely to become *hungry and thirsty, cold and naked*, left to wander up and down the land, *destitute, afflicted, tormented*; * unless some provision be wisely made to prevent it. 'Tis not enough to say, *depart in peace, be ye warmed and clothed*—but we must give them such things as they need, † whenever, wheresoever, and howsoever we can—no time is to be lost, lest, through our indolence, a *weak brother perish, for whom Christ died*. ‡ Every one's private knowledge will furnish him with variety of objects on whom he may bestow his goods, by thus imitating the example of *Him who went about doing good*, § he will have the additional satisfaction of familiarizing the persons of the Poor, to his compassion and love, who are the visible images and representatives of our dear Lord, left behind Him, to receive at our hands, what we would wish to have done had we seen Him in want upon earth. Here we shall trace the features of Poverty in the wretched estate of industrious *housekeepers*, who labour hard to maintain large families, decayed *tradesmen*, aged *widows*, unfortunate *debtors*, and those deserving but *retired* persons who once saw better days, and have nothing left them but *misery and modesty*—they cannot dig, and to beg they are ashamed: || such will the compassionate heart seek out, and without adding fresh perplexity to

* Heb. xi. 37. † Jam. ii. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. viii. 11.

§ Acts x. 38. || Luke xvi. 3.

to their distress, give liberally and upbraid them not.*—In these cases our alms should not be done to be seen of men; nor, our left hand know what our right hand doth: but when the wants of the Poor are general and clamorous; when the Almighty in judgment, threatens a famine and destroys the provision of bread; all faces gather blackness; † nothing is seen but leading into captivity; nothing is heard but the voice of complaining in our streets: || then Public Charity calls upon every one, freely as he hath received, freely to give; § to let his light shine before men, ¶ that they may be provoked to a godly emulation in this matter; the poor may eat and be satisfied, † and, by their prayers to God, in behalf of their benefactors, “have it in their power to contribute more to your happiness, than it is possible for you to contribute to their’s.” Away with all mean, sordid objections, which Satan puts into the heart and mouths of the fearful, unbelieving, covetous, unmerciful, and profane, when they pray to be excused—such as,

— *the poor are burdensome*,—he that complains of this, reflects upon God who caused them to be so; yet hath put it in our power to remedy the evil: to enable us to undo *their heavy burdens*.** He hath made our’s *light*—hath given us, to give to

* Jam. i. 5. † Matt. vi. 3. ‡ Joel ii. 6.

|| Psal. cxliv. 14. § Matt. x. 8. ¶ Matt. v. 16.

† Psal. xxii. 26. ** Isa. lviii. 6.

to *them*; and implanted in our bosom such fine and sympathetic feelings of *humanity*, which even the most hardened are at some pains to suppress—

they are idle—some may be, but not all—and the helpless families of those who *are*, must not be left to *starve*: besides, if *work* is scarce for those who lately could earn their *bread* with the *sweat of their brow*, surely they have a claim upon many of us, who get *our* money without *any labour* at all: the *poor* are the *bees* of the commonwealth, who, during sunshine, gather *honey* for the rich; when, therefore, *winty* blasts shut them in, and disappoint them of their daily tasks, let us suffer them to *taste* at least of those *sweets* they have so plentifully laid up in store for us—

but, *they are ungrateful*—so are *we*, always to *God*, and often to our *brother*: yet our *heavenly Father* knoweth that *we* still have need,* and feedeth us: a sense of such unmerited goodness should cause us not to be weary in well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not;† which encouragement, given by the Apostle, were entirely needless, if we did not sometimes meet with *things* and *persons*, who by their conduct would almost provoke us to relieve them no more. “*Ingratitude*” may diminish the value of our bounty to the
“*receiver*,

* Matt. vi. 8.

† Gal. vi. 9.

“ receiver, but cannot to the giver, who hath
 “ done his best, and his work is with his God,
 “ who causes the sun to arise, and the rain to
 “ descend on the fields of those that acknowledge
 “ Him not.” Christians! if ye do good to *them*
only which do good to you, what thank have you?
for sinners also do even the same: and if ye lend to
them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have
ye? for sinners lend to sinners to receive as much
again: but love ye your enemies, and do good, and
lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward
shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the
Highest, for he is kind to the unthankful and to the
*evil.** By the Poor, for whom I am this day an
 unworthy advocate, I do not only mean, such in
 this parish, as have been born, or bred up in it,
 and the laws of the land compel us to provide for,
 but such as have *not*; commonly called the *cer-*
tificate-poor, strangers and foreigners, inhabitants
among us, whom the Word of God, and the
dictates of humanity, forbid us to exclude: Let
none wish to contract the channel, or lessen the
current of public liberality, which should run
down our streets like a mighty stream, or seek for
excuses either to give nothing, or what is next as
bad, a paltry pittance, grudgingly or of necessity,
for God loveth a cheerful giver.† The

* Luke vi. 31—38. † 2 Cor. ix. 7.

“ Bp. Beveridge in his celebrated sermon concerning *restitution*,
 “ hath the following very pertinent remark upon the saying of
 “ our

The quality of mercy is not *strain'd*.
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heav'n,
 Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest'd;
 It blesteth him that gives, and him that takes.

Let none ask, with churlish *Nabal*, shall I take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be: * but remember rather, what is written in the Law—if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love the stranger as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt—I am the Lord your God: † Doth any one yet scrupulously enquire, *And who is my neighbour?* let him read the story of the wounded traveller relieved by a Samaritan, (whom, behold from thenceforth, all generations have called good) who was not only of another parish, but another nation, and another religion—then go and do likewise. ‡ But I am persuaded better things of you, and things which

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accompany

“ our Lord. Luke xi. 41. Give alms as ye are able, and behold
 “ all things are clean to you: for so the Greek words *πλυντα εσονται*
 “ *δοτε ελεημοσυνην* properly signify, as might easily be shewn. And
 “ therefore as I hope ye all make a conscience of giving some-
 “ thing to the Poor, out of that which God hath given to you
 “ for that purpose; so I desire that you would always observe
 “ this rule in the doing it, even to proportion your Charity to
 “ your estate, lest otherwise God justly proportion your estates to
 “ your Charity; and if ye do not give as much as ye are able,
 “ make you able to give no more than ye do.” Vol. v. 406.

* 1 Sam. xxv. 11. † Levit. xix. 33, 34. ‡ Luke x. 37.

accompany salvation, though I thus speak: § I know the forwardness of your mind || on these occasions; how ready to distribute, willing to communicate! ¶ and I trust, to my latest experience of you, I shall always have to bear record and to boast, that throughout this place, in every acceptance of the word, *CHARITY NEVER FAILETH*.* Suffer, however, the word of exhortation, whilst,

III. I proceed to urge a few motives to stir you up to a liberal contribution for your poor brethren at this necessitous season.

1. Doth not nature itself teach us this—are not the Poor created by the same God and Father of us all; † bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh? Wherefore is a man bound to love his neighbour as himself, but that he views himself in him; the same wants and cares, hopes and fears, joys and comforts, being in all alike, all are exhorted to be of one mind, having compassion one of another, and to love as BRETHREN. ‡ Such the poor and needy are stiled in the text, and in the language of the prophet *Isaiab*, he that doth not deal his bread to the hungry, or clothe the naked, is said to hide himself from his own flesh; † Pride, therefore, was not made for man.**

2. The rule of Equity and law of Justice enact compassion

§ Heb. vi. 9. || 2 Cor. ix. 2. ¶ 1 Tim. vi. 18.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 8. † Ephes. iv. 6. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 8.

† Isa. lviii. 7. ** Ecclus. x. 18.

compassion and relief to the *poor*; for what do we, but that which we expect shall in like circumstances be done unto *us*; and in so doing, our *Lord* says, we shall never be *disappointed*. *Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom.** Though rich and affluent now, we may by a change of Providences, be reduced to beg *our bread*, and seek it out of *desolate places*; † though *healthy* and *strong* at present, we cannot expect to continue so long; and when we shall come to lie sick upon our bed, our *pride* be pretty well *humbled*, and our *prejudices* removed, the tender care and watching of the *poor* may abundantly repay us for all the kindnesses we shall have shewn them unto that time.—But,

3. *This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. ‡ I command thee*, saith God; a contempt or defiance of His authority in this instance, is as much *sin* as any other transgression, and will be so *punished* in that day, when he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. § *Charity* may be called the *royal law of Christ*, || because it is the chief command illustrated both by His own precept and practice, who so loved the world that He

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gave

* Luke vi. 38. † Psal. cix. 10. ‡ 1 Thes. v. 18.

§ Jam. ii. 13. || Jam. ii. 8.

*gave Himself for it:** and the *law of liberty* †—
because there is no *bondage* in the task, no *fear*
in love: ‡ “ the pleasure of it exquisite and un-
“ alloyed, attended and followed by no satiety
“ and disgust, no trouble, no bitterness, no re-
“ morse, no repentance,”—*it's yoke is easy and it's*
burden is light. §

4. The *Example* of the *Holy Jesus* is the brightest
comment on the *virtue* proposed to our imitation.
For what was *His Life* from the *cradle* to the *cross*?
it was one continued *act* of *Charity* to the bodies
and souls of men: twice it is recorded of Him,
that He wrought *a miracle to feed those who had*
nothing to eat; ¶ and when he said to the traitor
Judas, what thou doest, do quickly, the rest of the
disciples immediately concluded nothing else was
meant, but that *something should be bought* for their
own necessities, or *given to the poor* ¶—the one be-
ing as daily attended unto, as the other. “ *My*
“ *brethren, consider the apostle and high priest of our*
“ *profession. Christ Jesus.* † He gave *Himself* for
“ *us*: He came down from heaven to give life
“ to the world, from which he received only
“ persecution, sorrow, pain, and death. Yet the
“ delight afforded Him by His employment was
“ an over-balance for all His sufferings—it was
“ His refreshment and His support through the
“ course

* John iii. 16.—Tit. ii. 14. † Jam. i. 25. ‡ 1 John iv. 18.

§ Matt. xi. 30. ¶ Matt. xiv. 19.—xv. 36.

¶ John xiii. 29. † Heb. iii. 1.

“ course of his pilgrimage: *My meat, saith He,*
 “ *is to do my Father’s will, and to finish his work.**
 “ *He went about doing good:* His life was ever
 “ active and ever useful; *living,* He preached
 “ wherever He came, the doctrine of salvation;
 “ *dying,* He bore His last testimony to it’s truth:
 “ for the *suffering of death, crowned with honour,*
 “ *invested with all power,* and seated at the right
 “ *band of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; †*
 “ like His bright representative in the firma-
 “ ment, He diffuses *light and life* unto the ends
 “ of the earth; He *reigns and shines* for the
 “ benefit of the world, and in so doing He is
 “ pronounced and proclaimed by every creature,
 “ *God, over all, blessed for ever. Amen. ‡*

5. The proof of our faith in Jesus is best
 evinced by our labour of love, which love ye have
 shewed for His name sake, who have ministered unto
 the poor, and the saints, and yet do minister: § by
 this shall all men know that we are His disciples, and
 love Him, not only in word and in tongue, but in
 deed and in truth. || St. John hath written a whole
 epistle on the subject, we have only to read it, to
 feel the force of it, reduced to this short com-
 pass: *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to*
love one another. And this commandment have we
from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother
also. ¶ — And,

6. In

* John iv. 34. † Heb. viii. 1. ‡ Rom. ix. 5. § Heb. vi. 10.
 || John xiii. 35.—1 John iii. 18. ¶ 1 John iv. 11, 21.

6. *In keeping it, there is great reward*,† “ the
 “ properties of which will deserve your notice.

“ *It is immediate*; the husbandman in this case
 “ waits not as in others, a long season for his
 “ harvest; in sowing, he reaps: nay, the very
 “ desire of doing good, the very first thought of
 “ that kind, which springs up in the soul, brings
 “ with it it's own abundant reward. It produces
 “ a pleasure unknown to those who erect their
 “ happiness on the misery of others, or who
 “ make the happiness of others a source of misery
 “ to themselves.

“ *It is secure*—it may be called one's own; a
 “ stranger intermeddleth not with it,‡ to disturb
 “ it, the thief cannot break through and steal it
 “ away.§

“ *It is durable*—meer earthly felicity of every
 “ kind, even the most innocent, like other ter-
 “ restrial productions, involves in itself the seeds
 “ of it's own dissolution. There is a leaven in the
 “ lump|| that will sour and corrupt it, there is a
 “ worm in the gourd¶ already at work to corrode
 “ and consume it. But the happiness now recom-
 “ mended to you never wastes nor diminishes;
 “ it increases in the enjoyment; it renders other
 “ pleasures needless, and supplies their place,
 “ growing every day more and more satisfactory
 “ and delightful: but most of all will it be found

“ so

† Psal. xix. 11. ‡ Prov. xiv. 10. § Matt. vi. 20.

|| Gal. v. 9. ¶ Jonah iv. 7.

“ so in that day (not far from every one of us)
 “ when a solemn leave must be taken of the
 “ world and it’s most celebrated pleasures; when
 “ all we have *received* must be *parted* with, and
 “ that alone will *remain* with us, which we have
 “ *given away*.”

And though most true it is, that the *Alms* we give away will avail *nothing* to our *justification before God*, when substituted in the room of that one full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction of His dear Son;—and if a man give all his goods to feed the poor in a self-righteous spirit, it will profit him *nothing**—yet when wrought in thankfulness of the redeemer’s love, they will come up as a memorial before God,† that our faith was not vain; they will follow us to the resurrection, when he that hath given but a cup of cold water to a perishing brother, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God,‡ shall in no wise lose his reward.§ “ For lo! an
 “ awful silence, and all the attention of heaven
 “ engaged; whilst from the throne of judgment
 “ proceed these gracious words addressed to the
 “ merciful.” *I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.—Verily, I say unto you, in as much*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

† Acts x. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

§ Mark ix. 41.

much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*

I am emboldened to solicit your ready contributions for the relief of our Poor, from a consideration of the alarming scarcity of every necessary article of life—the expected severity of the winter—the compassionate attention which is now shewn to the distressed in many parts of the kingdom, and in our own County-Town,—and particularly, from the encouragement I have in the patronage of that Noble Friend of the poor in our neighbourhood, whose liberality to us at all times, and his generous donation on the present occasion, will, I trust, diffuse among us both a spirit of gratitude and imitation. Put on then, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies; kindness, humbleness of mind; † always remembering the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, (and sweet words they are) how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive: ‡

If therefore, there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind: look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others: let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: §—so shall the blessing of him that is ready to perish come upon you, and you will cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. ||

* Matt. xxv. 35—40.

† Col. iii. 12.

‡ Acts xx. 35.

§ Phil. ii. 1—5.

|| Job xxix. 13.

T H E E N D.

